



Plant permanent or temporary cover crops between rows

What to do:

Instead of maintaining bare soil, try planting a cover crop of clover, vetch, or annual grasses between the rows. Avoid mowing between March 15 and June 15, or mow as late as possible; this is the peak nesting and hatching season for pheasants, quail, and other ground nesting species. Orchards with 18-inch grass stands, located near water, often attract nesting ducks. A 100-acre prune orchard in Sutter County had approximately 55 duck nests with 520 eggs in its cover-cropped areas.

Cover crops can provide habitat for many beneficial insects. To alleviate concerns about attracting unwanted insects or the potential for pest build up, contact some of the Integrated Pest Management resources listed in this publication for help with preplanning and to provide information about insect population dynamics.

Benefits:

- Provides excellent nesting, food, and

escape cover for a variety of wildlife species, particularly ground-nesting species. Also provides habitat for beneficial reptiles.

- Offers habitat for insects required by game bird chicks.

- Stabilizes the soil, reduces soil erosion and soil compaction, and helps control dust.

- Provides green manure and increases water filtration.

- Offers habitat for beneficial insects that can reduce pest damage and some of the need for pesticides.

- Controls noxious weeds and reduces the need for herbicides.

- Lowers labor costs. Less disking will be required and it's less costly to mow grass stands than it is to repeatedly disc and apply herbicides to maintain "clean" areas.

- Allows accumulation of nitrogen-rich organic material. Be sure to monitor nitrogen compatibility with crop growth.

Cover crops planted between rows of this Sacramento Valley almond orchard (left) and this Lodi-area vineyard (right) help sustain beneficial insects that control pests and serve as excellent temporary habitat for nesting pheasants, quail, and other ground-nesting species.



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LANGE TWINS